



Topical Tidbits

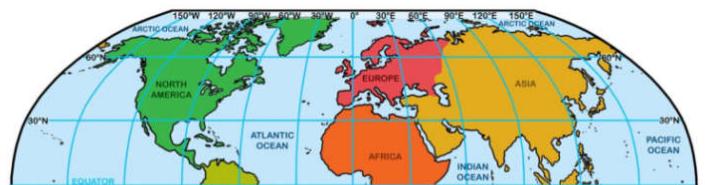
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Santa Around the World

Did you know that in some parts of the world it is summer? That's right! The seasons in the southern hemisphere are the opposite in the northern hemisphere. That means that some countries, like Australia, New Zealand, Mozambique, parts of South America and Africa, actually celebrate Christmas in the summer. If you are used to having snow in December, it might seem strange that not everyone has a white Christmas. Australians usually have a barbecue to celebrate the holidays. Some people in Tanzania might even roast a whole goat! It's fun looking at holiday stamps from these countries because they often show how different Christmas can be around the globe. One thing to remember, though, is that regardless of where we live, Santa is still a favorite worldwide. Enjoy this issue and happy holidays!



NORTHERN HEMISPHERE



SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE



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Santa gets a break from the snow when visiting the Southern Hemisphere.

Saint Nicholas

The stories heard today about Santa Claus are based on legends surrounding the life of a real person, St. Nicholas of Myra. St. Nicholas was very generous to children and the poor and was known for giving secret gifts to those in need. For example, he provided dowries for three sisters who would have been sold into slavery if they couldn't make good marriages. Over the centuries, elements of Northern European myths found their way into legends about the saint. During the Victorian era, writers and poets rediscovered these old stories about St. Nicholas. As a result, *A Visit from St. Nicholas*, or 'Twas the Night Before Christmas, was written in 1823. In this poem, the author imagines St. Nicholas as a "right jolly old elf" who travels the world on Christmas Eve in a sleigh pulled by reindeer, distributing gifts to children.

(These reindeer became really well known in the song *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* written in 1949.) The name *Santa Claus* is an Americanization of the Dutch *Sinterklaas*, which translates to *Saint Nicholas*. Many people around the world celebrate St. Nicholas' feast day on December 6th. The easiest way to tell the difference between St. Nicholas and Santa Claus is to look at their hats. Because St. Nicholas was a bishop, he is usually seen wearing a tall, pointy hat called a *miter* and a long robe. Santa's hat is usually red with white fur and he wears a coat and pants. Circle all the stamps below that picture St. Nicholas.



Santa in Many Languages

Not every country has a Santa that brings gifts. Read about the different people or creatures that bring gifts to children in these countries. Then match them to the correct stamp. Answers below.

A. In Italy a good witch named *La Befana* delivers presents. On the eve of January 6th, children leave their shoes by the fireplace. *La Befana* comes down the chimney on her broomstick to leave gifts. (Hint: The stamp that has *La Befana* is NOT from Italy!)

B. In Mexico children wait until January 6th for their presents. The Three Kings, or *Los Tres Reyes*, bring the gifts. Children put shoes by the front door to get their gifts.

C. In Sweden a gnome called *Juletomten* brings gifts in a sleigh driven by goats.

D. In Switzerland the *Christkind* or Christ Child brings the gifts. In some towns, *Christkind* is an angel who comes down from heaven to give gifts.

E. The Dutch *Sintirklass* arrives on December 6th. Children leave a wooden shoe filled with hay and carrots for the donkey which carries St. Nicholas' pack of toys. The good children get gifts.



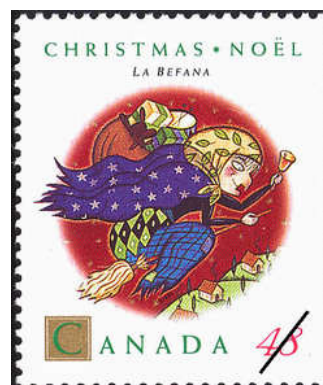
1. _____



2. _____



3. _____



4. _____



5. _____

Christmas Seals

Christmas seals are labels placed on mail during the Christmas season to raise funds and awareness for charitable programs. Christmas seals are regarded as a form of cinderella stamp because they look like stamps but can't be used for postage. They originated in Denmark in 1904 when a postal clerk got the idea to help children with tuberculosis (sometimes shortened to TB). An image of the first seal is at the top right. After six years of selling the seals, enough money was raised to build a hospital for these children.

They were first introduced in the United States in 1907 after Emily Bissell heard about the success of the program in Europe. (See the second stamp to the right.) Today Christmas seals in the U.S. benefit the American Lung Association. Many different countries issue their own Christmas seals. Because the seals are issued at Christmas, Santa Claus is a popular subject. A fun way to collect seals is to look for them on covers (envelopes). You might even see some in your holiday mail this year. On the next page is an activity using Christmas seals. Print the page out on cardstock and cut carefully along the dotted lines. Then see if you can arrange the seals in the order that they were issued.



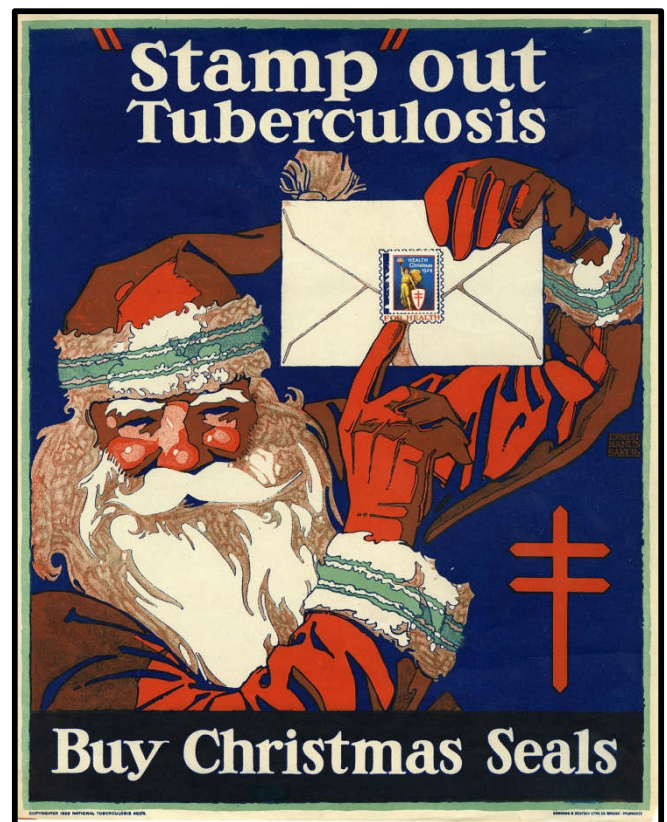
The queen was pictured on Denmark's first Christmas seal. The word *Julen* means Christmas.



The USPS issued this stamp in 1980 to honor Emily Bissell.



The top two covers have seals on the front, although they can also be found on the back of the envelope. The bottom image is a postcard.



Posters reminded people to buy Christmas seals.

Christmas Seal Game

Directions: Cut along dotted lines and then put in chronological date by issue.



Santa Race

The holidays are always a busy time of year. See who can be the first one to get to Santa at the bottom of the board. Use a coin for a marker and one die. Place the markers on start and take turns rolling the die. The first one to reach Santa by rolling the exact number is the winner.

S T A R T	 <p>Mailed your letter to Santa early this year. Skip ahead 4.</p>	 <p>Spend the day shopping. Lose a turn.</p>	 <p>Get all the presents wrapped. Take another turn.</p>	 <p>Roll a 1, 2, or 3, go back to START—you're on the naughty list. Roll a 4, 5, or 6, you're safe—you've been good!</p>
	<p>Help your family decorate the Christmas tree.</p> 	 <p>Go caroling at the nursing home. Move ahead 1 space.</p>	<p>Time to hang up your wreath.</p> 	
	<p>Lost your mittens! Go back to start.</p> 	<p>Stop to watch a parade. Go back 2 spaces.</p> 	 <p>Build a snowman.</p>	
<p>Oh, no! You got caught peeking at your presents under the tree. Go back 3 spaces.</p> 	<p>Your gingerbread house wins first place! Go ahead 2 spaces.</p> 	 <p>Make cookies for an elderly neighbor. Roll again.</p>	 <p>Help decorate your house for the holidays.</p>	
	<p>Get lots of packages in the mail today.</p> 	<p>Made it to Santa.</p> <p>You win!</p>		
 <p>Time to hang up your stocking.</p>	 <p>Hurt your ankle while ice skating. Lose a turn.</p>			

Santa Fun

New Santa Stamps!

These new stamps from the USPS are called *Sparkling Holidays*. They are from old Coca Cola ads. Coke first started using Santa in its advertisements in the 1920s. The images of Santa on these stamps were done by artist Haddon Sundblom from the 1940s to 1960s. The four single stamps are from a booklet and the stamp on the right is a souvenir sheet. These can be purchased at your local post office or at usps.com.



Dear Santa

Dear Santa,
I don't have
a chimney.
If you knock my
dad will open
the door.



SANTA CLAUS
325 S SANTA CLAUS LN
NORTH POLE AK 99705-7757

Write a Letter to Santa

Use the blank letter template on the next page to write a letter to Santa. His address is printed on the envelope to the left.

Santa Jokes

Q: What do you call Santa when he has no money?

A: Saint *Nickel*-less!

Q: What kind of motorcycle does Santa ride?

A: A *Holly* Davidson!

Q: Why does Santa always go down the chimney?

A: Because it *soots* him!

Q: What did Santa say to Mrs. Claus when he looked out the window?

A: Looks like *rain*, dear!







Santa Claus